

**(Washington, DC)** Today, Reps. Alcee L. Hastings (FL-23), Corrine Brown (FL-3), Kathy Castor (FL-11), Ted Deutch (FL-19), and Frederica S. Wilson (FL-17) responded to Florida Governor Rick Scott signing into law legislation (HB 353) requiring that applicants for benefits through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program be drug tested. TANF is a block grant program administered by the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Family Assistance in order to help States provide work opportunities to needy families. Under HB 353, applicants must pay for the drug testing upfront, which typically costs about \$35. Individuals who test negative for drugs are reimbursed the cost of the screening while those who test positive for drugs lose their benefits for at least one year.

"The TANF Program helps tens of thousands of Floridians care for their families and access vital job opportunities," **said Congressman Alcee L. Hastings.** "Governor Scott's new drug testing law is not only an affront to families in need and detrimental to our nation's ongoing economic recovery, it is downright unconstitutional. If Governor Scott wants to drug test recipients of TANF benefits, where does he draw the line? Are families receiving Medicaid, State Emergency Relief, or educational grants and loans next?"

"Drug tests for benefits recipients represent an extreme and illegal invasion of personal privacy," **said Congresswoman Corrine Brown.** "Indeed, investigating people when there is probable cause to suspect they are abusing drugs is one thing, but these tests amount to strip searching our state's most vulnerable residents merely because they rely on the government for financial support during these difficult economic times."

"Republican Gov. Rick Scott's rigid ideology blinds him to the struggles of Florida families who were hit hard by the worst recession in our lifetimes," **said Congresswoman Kathy Castor.** "Scott and the Republican Legislature add a costly and bureaucratic burden without any demonstration that a problem exists."

"The number of needy families relying on welfare assistance in Florida has skyrocketed by over 50 percent since this devastating recession struck," **said Congressman Ted Deutch.** "If Governor Scott were truly concerned about reducing our state welfare rolls, he would focus on creating jobs and economic opportunity for Florida's families."

"Governor Scott has made a conscious decision to attack working families by subjecting them to

needless drug tests instead of focusing on creating jobs," **said Congresswoman Frederica S. Wilson.**

"This is nothing but an attempt to squeeze poor people, who cannot afford to pay for their own testing, off of welfare rolls. Why does he want to balance the budget on the backs of our most vulnerable? This is an absolute shame."

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